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In the army: Notes left by Grenadians

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ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada — Among the papers of Gen. Hudson Austin, the feared commander of the Peoples Revolutionary Army (PRA), there was a sheaf of written apologies from Grenadians who had offended him.

There also was the draft of the resignation of Pvt. Ellery Bubb, a soldier in the PRA for four years, who had "looked up from within the depth of my inner thought" and discovered that he was a lousy soldier.

And there was a doctor's detailed diet plan, left behind by Lt. Col. Ewart Layne, Austin's second-in-command.

These are among the varied documents left in the forts and training camps of the PRA. Many of them, like Ellery Bubb's resignation, were found in the rubble of bomb-shattered barracks. Their authors could

not be accounted for because a list of the Grenadian dead remains incomplete.

The rubble yielded a treasure trove of army documents to be picked over by CIA agents, military intelligence officers and journalists. Fort Rupert, the military headquar-

ters on a hillock in the center of town, has proved to be the richest source, but PRA training camps at Calivigny and Grand Etang also have given up some voices from a dead revolution.

They depict an amateurish army

that, despite its central position in Grenadian life after bringing Maurice Bishop to power in a relatively bloodless coup in 1979, numbered only 700 to 900 men, backed up by a part-time citizens' militia perhaps twice that size.

In the composition books kept by all PRA soldiers, there is plentiful evidence of eastern-bloc-style political indoctrination and military training by Cuban advisers.

But, reading them, it also becomes clear that the army had struggled with such basics as teaching its soldiers how to read and write so they could understand their complicated Soviet weapons manuals (written in English and Russian), or teaching them how to solve the simple math required to figure anti-aircraft trajectories. Many of the soldiers here are barely literate, and few seemed to have had a firm grasp of long division.

The PRA troops often proved to be neither good nor enthusiastic students of their Cuban and Grenadian instructors. For many, said a U.S. intelligence officer, the PRA has just a good-paying job in a high-employment land.

Repeatedly this year, the soldiers were warned to expect and prepare for a U.S. invasion.

They even expected the combined helicopter-and-paratroop assault that did in fact come. Many of the composition books had small crude sketches of helicopters, with instructions on where to aim to shoot them down — one lesson that apparently was well-learned by at least some of the soldiers who, using only automatic rifles with a range of 500 meters, managed to shoot down several U.S. helicopters.

Besides the soldiers' lesson books, there were many military command documents apparently too trivial for confiscation by the CIA and military intelligence, who had first shot at combing over the PRA's detritus.

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